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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5975  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000155

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [UN](#)  
SUBJECT: DARFUR: COMMANDERS CONFERENCE IN FLUX

REF: KHARTOUM 00116

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) again postponed the conference of Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory commanders in North Darfur to February 5 due to logistical problems in transporting the commanders to the event site, having already moved 24 commanders to North Darfur on January 29. According to the U.S. representative to the Cease-fire Commission (CFC) in El Fasher, there is no indication that an alleged January 30 Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) bombing near Jebel Marra caused the postponement. However, SAF troop and Arab militia movements near the conference location, as well as mixed signals from the Sudanese government on security guarantees for the event, continue to complicate the situation.

12. (C) The internal maneuvering of the commanders themselves also remains obtuse, and as reported reftel, which commanders attend the conference will determine its impact. At present, three outcomes could result from the conference, if it is held: 1) A new, unified rebel movement could emerge that would participate in a viable political dialogue with the Sudanese government; 2) A new, unified rebel movement in North Darfur could merge with rebel elements based in Chad and pursue a policy of regime change in Sudan, backed by funding from Chad; and 3) A new movement, composed of a handful of rebel commanders with limited support and resources, could meet in North Darfur and form yet another faction in the ongoing conflict with the Sudanese government.

13. (C) Reports indicate that the fighters allied with Abdel Wahid Al-Nur, who number approximately 1500, and Ahmed Abdul Shafi, who number approximately 300, have tired of the ongoing conflict and stalled political process and plan to attend the conference. Given their lack of resources and estranged political leadership, it is unlikely that this would result in a viable movement that could engage in substantive negotiation with the Sudanese government. Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minawi chief of staff Jumaa Hagar, however, is now in North Darfur and engaging in discussions to unite with these groups. Though suffering from the same lack of resources that has plagued SLM/Minawi since the signing of the DPA, Hagar still commands some public support. Recent first-hand Department of Defense (DoD) reporting noted that crowds numbering in the thousands greeted Hagar at various points as he moved from South Darfur to North Darfur for the discussions on the conference. His union with Abdel Wahid and Abdul Shafi's forces might energize a new movement in the short term, but it would not be sustainable due to the shortage of resources.

14. (C) The "swing vote" in the plan for non-signatory

unification will be Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/G-19 commander Adam Bakhit. There are indications that Bakhit has allied with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Khalil Ibrahim; the Sudan Liberation Army led by Adam Ali Shoggar; and the Federal Democratic Alliance, led by Sharif Harir and Ahmed Ibrahim Diraig -- in an attempt to revitalize the now-defunct National Redemption Front (NRF). (Note: All of the above leaders are in Chad or along its border. End note.) The "new NRF" would be enhanced by Bakhit's 2500 fighters, bringing the movement's approximate strength to 3700, and benefit from significant Chadian financing. Though at present it is unclear whether Bakhit will attend the conference in North Darfur, he and other SLA/Unit-G-19 leaders, such as Khamis Abdullah and Suleiman Marjan, may use it as an opportunity to entice other commanders and fighters to their new movement, with the promise of Chadian backing. Despite the numbers of fighters and resources, however, this "new NRF" would lack a Fur in its political leadership, which would limit its public appeal in Darfur.

15. (C) Comment: Despite the logistical problems that AMIS has confronted in moving commanders to the North, it plans to continue the operation for the coming days. Some commanders within the SLA remain opposed to the machinations of Chad and its proxies. They may continue to resist the temptation of greater resources in exchange for the possibility of a constructive dialogue with the Sudanese government and may yet attract support from the SLA/Unity-G-19 in a cross-tribal alliance to pursue peace. We have urged the non-signatory commanders to make a public statement in support of peaceful dialogue with the Sudanese government at the beginning of the conference. Until the conference begins -- and the attendees make their intentions known in public -- it will be difficult for us to assess the state of the shifting rebel alliances.

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End comment.  
POWERS